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The Vista of Eternity

BY M. H. LICHLITER

But ye are come . . . to the spirits of just men made perfect. Hebrews 12:23.

A NEW county superintendent of public schools was making his first official visit. He found, in a certain rural community, a small, nondescript building, poorly equipped, with an old-fashioned village schoolmaster in charge. "You don't seem to have much of a staff here," said the superintendent rather critically. "Who are your teachers?" The man drew himself up and said: "Sir, Shakespeare is on my staff, Milton and Scott and Luther and Carlyle are all on my staff—teachers in this school."

We have no record of the official reply. The chances are that the village teacher was put down as a crank—a little touched, perhaps, in the head. I wonder! May it not be that he was right in a deeper and more vital sense than we have ever dared to imagine? By what logic do we set up two sharply differentiated groups—the living and the dead? Times without number a typical obituary is slipped into my hands at funerals. "He is survived by a wife, a son and a daughter. Two children are dead." Are they? I wonder!

Whatever else one may say about Easter, there is something in the atmosphere of the day which challenges that conception. It is not simply that Shakespeare or Milton or our dearest friend live on in books and in memories. We believe that they are alive and in fellowship with us. There is a comforting assurance in the twelfth chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews. Speaking to those who have accepted Christ's way of life, this brilliant unknown writer says: "Ye are come . . . to the spirits of just men made perfect."

What does that mean? It means that what we call "heaven" and "earth" are not separated from each other by an impassable gulf. They are not space-concepts at all. They are simply aspects of continuing experience. Those we call "dead" are really just alive as we are—and very near to us all. We are surrounded by an en-

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compassing cloud of witnesses. The vista of eternity is not something which stretches out before us into illimitable distances. It is something which we experience now and here.

ETERNITY IN TIME

We are thinking today of one of the byproducts of the Easter tradition. What actually happened on the first Easter no one knows and it makes no difference. There are many who prefer to believe in a literal physical resurrection, that Jesus actually came back in the flesh, that he was seen and touched by those who had known him before the crucifixion and that, literally and physically, he later ascended into heaven. There are others who prefer to believe with Paul that the resurrection was a spiritual experience in the lives of the disciples, a deep and abiding feeling that Jesus was a living reality, unseen but felt in the hearts of all who loved him. There are two ways of observing Easter. One is to make it the day of the physically *Risen* Christ; the other is to make it the day of the spiritually *Living* Christ. So far as the byproducts of the Easter tradition are concerned, it makes no difference which view you hold.

History, at least, is clear. By the time the Fourth Gospel was written, at the end of the first century, the spiritual interpretation of Easter seems to have become dominant. Eternal life was not something which awaits one beyond the tomb. It is a kind of life which may be lived now and which transcends the incident of death. Let me quote from the Gospel according to St. John: "This is eternal life, to know Thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent . . . He who hears my word and puts his faith in him who sent me, has eternal life; no judgment will be passed upon him; he has already crossed from death to life." One finds the same emphasis in the First Epistle of John: "We know that we have crossed over from death to life, because we love the brethren." And again, in the Epistle to the Hebrews, eternal life is pictured as a present possession. It is not something into which we enter when we die. It is something which we experience now because of what we believe. "But ye are come unto mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable hosts of angels, to the general assembly and church of the first born who are enrolled in heaven, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to God the Judge of all, and to Jesus the mediator of a new covenant."

THE MYSTICAL IN LIFE

That is strong meat for an age which has lost so much of the mystical out of life and which knows neither its Bible nor its church history. But that is exactly how the men of the first century felt about immortality. They were not bothering their heads about the survival of personality after bodily death. They were concerned about living the sort of life in which death could be very little more than an incident in a continuing progress.

Poets are always better interpreters of this deeper meaning of Easter than philosophers. Percy Ainsworth tells the whole story:

It will not meet us where the shadows fall
  Beside the sea that bounds the Evening Land;
It will not greet us with its first clear call
  When Death has borne us to the farther strand.

It is not something yet to be revealed—
  The everlasting life—'tis here and now;
Passing unseen because our eyes are sealed
  With blindness for the pride upon our brow.

It is the power whereby low lives aspire
  Unto the doing of a selfless deed,
Unto the slaying of a soft desire,
  In service of the high, unworldly creed.

It is the clarion when the sun is high,
  The touch of greatness in the toil for bread,
The nameless comfort of the Western sky,
  The healing silence where we lay our dead.

Easter, when it is understood at its highest, turns our minds from what may or may not be beyond the grave to a quality of life which can never be buried at all. That is what the Resurrection really means, that there was in Jesus Christ a quality of life which was actually deathless. What became of his body does not matter. As the new Dean of St. Paul's in London has said with great common sense, "It is impossible to prove that a tomb was empty nineteen centuries ago, and even if it could be proved, we should be unable to show that all alternative suggestions were impossible." We come back to the essential truth, that eternity is something we may experience now and here, and any rational vista of eternity should comprehend those present spiritual values in our lives which cannot possibly die. "Ye *are* come . . . to the spirits of just men made perfect." There is a communion of saints, there is a vital fellowship of spirits which absolutely transcend the incident of death. There is such a thing as eternity in time.

THE FACT OF DEATH

Of course we cannot ignore the fact of death. This is a realistic age, and we find ourselves saying rather stubbornly: "Well, after all, Jesus did die, didn't he?" Yes, he did. The world will never forget how he died. And all the rest of us must die. Yes, that also is true. But everything depends upon what we make of the fact of death.

There is a distinction here that Easter drives home to our hearts. The death of Jesus was an event in history. It happened at a certain time and in a certain place. The Resurrection of Jesus was not an event in history. It was not something that happened at a certain time and in a certain place. The Resurrection of Jesus was and is the symbol of a continuing life that was not interrupted by the fact of death. It has been dramatized to catch the imagination of mankind. It has been dramatized by an empty tomb, a voice in the garden, a spectacular appearance in a closed room with all the doors locked. But back of the drama was the fact that Jesus was actually more of a reality to his disciples after his death than he was before. His continuing presence in their lives was the incentive to carry his message to the uttermost parts of the earth. If you

press me with the question as to what happens to those who die without having lived that quality of life which is called eternal, I answer frankly that I do not know. I am reverently agnostic. I cannot accept the theory of annihilation. I cannot believe in the idea of everlasting punishment. I find myself hoping that in the life beyond the tomb there are disciplinary forces which may gradually but effectively transform lives that have been anything but Christlike here. It is entirely probable that environmental influences are responsible for antisocial qualities in human life, and that many are bad simply because they were not given a fair chance to

M. H. Lichliter

be good. It is my hope that God means to win the game at last in every human life, that:

> Not one good shall be destroyed
> Or cast as rubbish to the void
> When God hath made the pile complete.

But I am not at all agnostic about the eternal quality in lives which seek their inspiration from God. And the call of Easter is the call to live just that sort of life. The fact of death means nothing more to me than the disintegration of a body in which I am privileged to live, a body bequeathed to me from the brutes, and which has more or less adapted itself to the sort of life one must live in this world. Death means only the destruction of a house in which I live. It does not touch me. If I keep myself responsive to the lure of high and lofty ideals, if I fight hard to keep the soul on top, if when I stumble along the road I face in the right direction when I get up, if there is in me the will to be loyal to the good, the true and the beautiful, then there will be found in me certain values which transcend the fact of death. If, in other words, I live *now* with the spirits of just men made perfect, there can be no element of moral surprise in anything which may await me beyond the incident of death. My vista of eternity comprehends all the spiritual values in the present, which will live forever, and death cannot possibly matter.

THE CONSPIRACY OF SILENCE

Why then this conspiracy of silence? Why can't we talk easily and candidly about dying? And most especially why do families, and doctors, and ministers agree in a conspiracy of silence which makes it impossible to talk about death to those who are obviously dying? We ought to thank God that our brethren of the Roman Catholic communion are, in this matter, more consistent and more Christian. Without apology, without reservations, without embarrassment, the priest enters to perform the last rites of the church. The dying man or woman is offered all that religion has to give as a comfort and as an inspiration.

With us that sort of thing is so often discouraged. It is the proper thing for everyone to talk as though the patient were to get well. It is not considered good form to let one know that he has no chance to live. There is something radically wrong about the hesitation to face death with candor and with courage.

If a dear friend is leaving us for a trip to Europe, we talk volubly about all that he is to see, about art galleries and palaces and hotels and the quaint ways of foreign lands. But if a friend is about to go to heaven, we have nothing to say. Is it because there is, at bottom, a basic unbelief in what may lie beyond the incident of death? Why are we so hesitant and so embarrassed? Why is it considered a symbol of a forlorn hope if a minister prays in a sick room? Dr. Edward Shillito, a leading Congregational minister of London, says plainly that it looks as though we did not plan as if we were certain that beyond the bounds of this life our friends would enter a life not less but more personal than the life lived here on earth.

Do you recall the deeply human touch in the gospel story of the Transfiguration? When Jesus was there on the mount talking with Moses and Elijah, what do you suppose they were all talking about? The record says that they were speaking of the decease which he was about to accomplish at Jerusalem. In the midst of the glory they spoke of death. Why not? If one has lived with the spirits of just men made perfect, if one has lived the eternal life now in this world, what difference could death make?

FACING DEATH HONESTLY

If we believe that, then why don't we talk that way? Let me say as strongly as I know how that I want no conspiracy of silence in my own sick chamber. If I cannot face the fact of near approaching death with level eyes and with untroubled heart and talk it over as calmly as I would discuss a trip to Europe, then all that I have preached to others is a lie. I know it would be harder to face the death of a loved one, but even so, if I am unable to meet that in the same spirit of anticipation of all that must await one who has lived a beautiful and useful life in the world, then there has been a tragic inadequacy in the religion which I have preached and in the religion I have tried to live.

There is much to be said for the unusual and somewhat eccentric habit of John Smith, Master of Harrow, one of England's great public schools. When he heard of one of his friends who was nearing death, he would rush in and warmly congratulate him. Why not? It seemed eccentric, but it was truly Christian.

FAREWELLS OF FAITH

May I leave with you two stories to enrich your memories of this Easter Sunday. One is told by Dr. Shillito of a very close friend. This man, the head of a large business, an artist, a statesman, and a loyal servant of Christ and the church was dying. He knew it. Everybody knew it. He set his house in order with meticulous deliberation. He asked for the newspapers each day and watched eagerly the trend of events and talked them over with his friends. He made the most of the last days with his family, talking with them easily and with no touch of morbid emotionalism, and dictated notes to friends in trouble and to friends who were facing an occasion of joy. Then the end came. Mr. Shillito adds: "He knew that he was soon to go to his Lord; and with very good cheer he went, as one might wave farewell from the deck of a ship starting on its way."

Dr. Russell Bowie, rector of Grace Protestant Episcopal Church, New York, tells the other story, of Wilbur Cosby Bell, professor in Virginia Theological Seminary in Alexandria. Dr. Bell was dying after a sudden illness of only a few hours. He sent this message to the boys he had taught in the Seminary: "Tell the boys that I've grown surer of God every year of my life, and I've never been so sure as I am right now. I'm so glad to find that I haven't the least shadow of shrinking or uncertainty. I've always thought so and now that I'm right up against it, I know. Life owes me nothing. I've had work that I loved, and I've lived in a beautiful place among congenial friends. I've had love in its highest form and I've got it forever. I can see now that death is just the smallest thing, just an accident, but it means nothing. There is no real break, and life, all that really counts in life, goes on."

So he passed, he who had always lived with the spirits of just men made perfect, and all the trumpets sounded for him on the other side.

Struggle to the Death

THE CHURCH of the future must present the great duties of life free from dogmatism and doubtful assertion, must give us those truths which are grounded in the very nature and conditions of human life unmixed with what is unproved or irrational.

Will the Christian church do this for us, will it adapt itself to man's clearing intellectual horizon and maintain its spiritual leadership, or must we henceforth seek elsewhere our guidance and inspiration?

The Christian church is engaged in a struggle to the death between the forces that make for such a liberalization of religion and those that make for reaction. On the outcome of this struggle depend our hopes—whether we, and our descendants, may come to her for our guidance, or whether we must look elsewhere.

DURANT DRAKE.

The New Armageddon

BY WILLIAM LLOYD IMES

And he gathered them together into a place called in the Hebrew tongue Armageddon. Revelation 16:16.

OUR modern world thinks it has little use for the other-world point of view. It is an intensely practical, earthly minded, disillusioned age in which we live. Nothing shocks us, nothing perturbs us. We expect anything: we think we know everything. But, try as we will, we cannot rule the transcendental out of life, nor laugh it out of court. It appears and reappears with provoking disturbance, and when we think at last we have reduced our world to a formula and have prepared life according to a pattern that is predictable and dependable, then along comes the upheaval of a new power, and we must not only reckon with it, but must try to understand it.

The sixth angel, in this episode of the seven heavenly beings described in the Book of Revelation is, like his fellows, pouring out a vial of wrath upon a part of the universe. His peculiar province was the drying up of the river Euphrates, in order that the kings might have passage toward the scenes of their coming conquests. It is not merely a plan of men, it is an act of God! What the little puppet-monarchs suppose they are doing in their own strength, the Ruler of the Universe is in reality doing in them and through them! Would to God they had possessed the daring and insight of Paul: "For it is God that worketh in you, both to will and to do His good pleasure." Then, as the sixth angel completed his vial-pouring, it is significantly added that "he gathered them together into a place called Armageddon."

That name is impressive; it means, literally, "a place of troops." Hebrew history had forever enshrined it in the popular memory. Ancient Megiddo was its forerunner, and it stood for the symbol of armed conflict, a last stand against the forces that are arrayed for one's destruction.

Now, every human community that is in any sense worthy of the name, is an Armageddon. Human society, at its best, is a place where the noblest and best within us must take the last stand against ignorance, falsehood and unbelief. The place whereon we moderns stand today is holy ground, if we but knew it! It is the assemblage of troops, the concourse of minds, the ascent of man from the level of the beast into the image of God. If you betray your soul into cheapness and cowardice, your Armageddon becomes thereby the scene of your greatest humiliation and defeat. Here in this very generation today are the forces that mean either our freedom and victory, or our enslavement and despair. We do not just happen upon goodness or truth: we cannot stumble into Paradise.

Twenty-five years ago and more, when this century was much younger than it is now, and had not the sense of disillusionment and realism which everywhere now confronts us, I recall the picturesque figure of Theodore Roosevelt, who had completed his second term as President of the United States. He is rather cynically sneered at today for what he then did, and indeed, much

that he attempted does seem crude and bombastic in the light of our better social vision today. However, rough and impulsive as he was, that lovable and forgivable old swashbuckler, he forever endeared himself to those who could see beneath the exterior of his quaint and quixotic self, because he believed that humanity's largest task lay in its final conquest of the wrong. Well could he and did he say, "Fear God and take your own part," in his challenging book of that day; and again, when he faced fearful odds at a certain never to be forgotten political convention, deserted utterly by multitudes of men of lesser mind and heart, he thundered

William Lloyd Imes

defiantly: *"We stand at Armageddon, and we battle for the Lord"!*

"Ancient history," the present day wiseacres reply. "Perhaps good enough for his day, but hopelessly inadequate for ours," the sophisticates of 1937 condescendingly comment. Very well: I challenge you by that same token! Do as well in your day as he did in his. Prove yourselves worthy as you face your Armageddon. Do you say there is no such crisis? Look about you on every side. "Can ye not discern the signs of the times?" On my study desk there is a little insignificant looking brown-covered pamphlet recently released by the American section of the Universal Christian Council. In its apparently innocent covers there is enough dynamite to blow our modern world to bits. It deals with some of the great fundamentals which the church must face in the human society with which it deals in our world today.

Let me quote at random, so that its message may not be distorted to suit our thesis, but may stand on its own merit.

"We live at a time when the world is giving birth to a new civilization. It is a fateful hour and emotions are tense."

Or again, by an English churchman: "The young are eager and hungry, for faith, for work, for a leader whom they can follow and trust without question. They are not interested in what at one time I would have gone to the stake for—liberty of thought. Once the young have found their leader and accepted his purpose there will be a revolution."

Still further, by an editor: "The real progenitor of the Black Legion is the Ku Klux Klan, as witness the night ridings, the whips and ropes, and all the rest of the stupid yet infinitely dangerous paraphernalia of the upsurgence of American bigotry and lust. No need to go to Germany or any other distant place to understand what is going on!"

And this, from a liberal Catholic: "Nationalism's kingdom is frankly of this world, and its attainment involves tribal selfishness and vainglory, a particularly ignorant intolerance and war."

So one might go on at great length, but the lesson is clear. We have met at our new Armageddon, and whether we realize it or not we have soon to display our mettle in the severest conflict that man ever had on this planet, not merely with sword, but with spirit; not merely with outward savagery which we futilely thought we had outgrown, but with ideas that are deeply rooted in the subsoil of the crassest human selfishness, hatred and greed. Are we able to withstand this conflict? What shall we do about it? What are our resources with which to meet it and to emerge with the kind of a world that shall be the foregleam of the kingdom of God?

I

Let us begin with this problem, which touches the very heart of our inquiry into our world and what religion has to say about its challenge. *"Can human progress and religion abide together in our world?"*

The most honest and direct answer I can offer is that if they do not abide together, then neither of them can go it alone much longer. And, as a counter challenge, I am bound to add this: that of all people who are duty bound to see that true progress and sound religious faith should work cooperatively, we who have had great privilege and the opportunity for progress are by far the most responsible. If we do not, by life and work, by service and sacrifice, make this our contribution to our generation, we may well tremble for future generations, and, most of all, with the added social and economic battles we must fight, we and those dependent upon us will go down into the most dismal and utter defeat. It is in this mood that true religion has a stirring call to all privileged and progressive-minded men and women. That call may be epitomized in this fashion:

One's prestige or power in this world should not be for the making of a living, but for making a life! Religion is not creed or dogma, but it is abundant life. Real progress therefore is vital to religion, and conversely, without true religion our life of intended progress in the arts and activities of mankind will wither and dwarf into brutally competitive strife.

I wish that all who claim they love God and their fellows would take this challenge seriously. If for the short space of one year we might get that vast army of privileged people in this world whom you and I know to take such an attitude, and maintain it against all seductions to self-seeking, a work of spiritual revolution both in our thinking and practice would take place, and we should never want to go back to the old order of things. Those of us who have privilege, education, power and influence, would use it all unstintedly for the constant uplift of the so-called masses, who have been told by demagogues that we feel ourselves arrogantly above them, and will never share with them the good things of material and spiritual welfare. These masses of lowly folk ought not to have to feel that way, but we cannot blame them if we are not adventurous and imaginative enough to help make this world just as truly theirs as it is ours. It is upon their physical toil that a very considerable part of our prosperity must be built, if at all. And, as a return for that, even if for no higher reason, we too, with mind and heart, should ever be toiling with them and for them. It is not a matter of pity or condescension. It is simple and forthright justice.

They should instinctively feel that we have their interests at heart, we of religious life, and that until cotton-farmer and miner, porter and domestic, can all realize with us the oneness of our cause, and that life becomes more tolerable for them as it becomes better for us, none of us are really happy, or even safe. Can we not begin now and see what unfinished tasks are around us right in our own communities? This day of chaos is a most strategic time in which to take such a forward step. God will not hear our Lenten devotions nor accept the sacrifices of a broken and contrite heart that we claim we offer, unless we prove it by bringing forth fruits meet for repentance. And be sure that it is not a penitence of commiseration. It is a penitence of God's sense of justice within us!

A telling pamphlet recently published by one of the church boards of Christian education gives this keen sentence that cuts like a knife as it speaks of youth's viewpoint in this confused world: "Five million American young people have no jobs and no chance for school. Another war threatens to blot out the life of the oncoming generation. To the 'moderns' who have cast off religious and moral restraints, and have found only futility for their pains, young people are saying, *'We don't want to be like you!'* "

And what one of us of older years can face that defi without heart-searching? Then the pamphlet goes further in shocking us out of our complacency with this: "Five hundred thousand American young people enrolled in tax-supported and independent universities are training for life and leadership in this era: these young people are not immoral, nor irreligious, nor unpatriotic: they *are* terribly bewildered."

I dare say many a youth finds his picture in that scene, but I am not so concerned for his recognition of himself as I am for the men and women of my age. Do we find our humbling and inevitable task there? If so, we had better set about it with all haste and earnestness.

I cannot forget some wise words recently spoken to a group of churchmen in a conference at one of our eastern colleges by A. A. Berle, a former "brain truster," and a man whom none of us could call pious in the narrow sense: "The country needs right now just a few more practical saints rather than a few more practical politicians."

Do you think so, too? If so, will you dare to be a "practical saint"? And our same wise friend then went on to declare: "We need men that are not afraid to say, 'This is right, and that is wrong,' and to have an Authority back of them that makes clear that selfishness and greed are not only bad morals, but bad economics."

And what one of us has not felt that if religion could only bring itself to say this out loud, and to send forth men and women who would live it out, cost what it may, we would have a revival of religion beside which all other revivals in the history of the church would pale into insignificance?

II

Another great area in which our modern idea of progress and true religion must join hands is in the development of institutional life that shall reflect the humanizing process more than the mechanical routine. We are such naive and contented creatures of our age, mere slaves to the machine, we modern folk with our pettiness and pretense. Religion teaches us that life is more than meat and the body more than raiment. Do you believe that? If that dictum of Christ is valid, then we of religious faith had better direct our institutional life in the way of making this come true for humanity at large. Here both the questions of general and racial progress in America stand out in bold relief.

What shall we do regarding that largest minority of American race groups that has been treated as a sort of tolerated but despised stepchild, because of its color and its previous servitude? Largely because of utter human selfishness and stupid prejudice this race has been deprived of great areas of both material and spiritual good. How can you and I face another Lent and Eastertide piously declaring that "the life is more than meat" when we know that the black tenant farmer is being robbed systematically of the fruit of his toil? Shall we stand by, with tongue in cheek, and bland smirk on the face, while black and white Arkansas sharecroppers fight side by side for justice, even forgetting the agelong race lines they had been taught by a corrupt feudal order? They are fighting at their Armageddon, true enough, but is it theirs alone? Is it not ours as well?

Tell me honestly, could white and black ministers of religion fight as valiantly side by side in the cause of Christ? Do they? And is not any struggle for human justice and good will also by that same token the cause of Christ? Or, how can we say anything about spiritual values to a colored mother in America who sees her sons and daughters grow up in a world that denies them fullest opportunity, and when all too often both church and society turn aside with a shrug of the shoulders, as if to say, "It is none of our business"? But what is our business? Are the Scottsboro boys, degraded and wretched through poverty and terrible social neglect, not worth saving? Are those equally degraded white

mill girls, women of the street by reason of industrial exploitation, not worth saving? All the years since 1931 cry out in the name of heaven that America still thinks more of the race issue involved in that celebrated case than it does of the souls of its poor misguided youth, both boys and girls. They are both God's children, and we have sold them into devil-slavery. It is we who bear the guilt, not they.

Christ would not turn away from such a challenge. He still stands ready to save both our lives and this whole situation from despair through the moral and spiritual power of privileged men and women, if they are only willing.

There is your battle, as well as that of all humanity with you. It is your Armageddon, as well as theirs. This seemingly hopeless situation is the great opportunity of a progressive age and of a virile religion together. It is the task of progress to provide a technique, and that of religion to give an enduring power. It cannot be progress without religion, for that will give us clever men and women without souls. Nor can it be religion without genuine progress, for that will burn itself out with emotional power minus judgment and direction.

There is no doubt that humanity is offered today a well-disciplined content of knowledge. Our mental discipline far excels our moral and spiritual life. This appears true regardless of race or creed or class, in the light of democracy's professed ideals. It is quite in line with the trend of the day. Many even go so far as to say that this of itself is enough to insure humanity's highest good. But is it? What has progress to say about duty and character, and about discipline of the mind in terms of spiritual growth? I think I know some of the most ardent and attractive humanists of our world of progress, and I have yet to find that they can, with all their resources of idealism, effect the great change in temper and spirit which even the humblest religionists can do. God may yet shame our lukewarm and professional religionist by allowing the humanist to save humanity, but I doubt it. Christ came to tell us that God fights with us in the terrible Armageddon that threatens our souls. And "He who spared not his own Son, how shall he not freely with him give us all things?" A new revival is needed, a life of the spirit that gets out into humanity's struggles and will not turn back from its bitterest and most tragic needs. As long as economic exploitation, fascism, materialistic radicalism, disfranchisement, color-segregation, poverty and crime go on, there is no lack of abundant material upon which religion can operate with power, to expose the wrong and to uphold the right. Unless I mistake the present mood of men and women who look Godward, religion and progress must forever become partners in this venture of faith. If they do not, not only will the one fail, but both will crash together. We stand at Armageddon, and we battle for the Lord!

III

Life is a very real thing, and to be truly alive is not merely a state of being, but it is a spiritual achievement. And when one is willing to ask what life is, and to face its serious responsibilities, then one is not far from the kingdom of God. Was it not of this wistful temper that Paul Dunbar sang a generation ago:

> My tearful eyes my soul's deep hurt are glassing,
> For I would hail and check that ship of ships.
> I stretch my hands imploring, cry aloud:
> My voice falls dead a foot from mine own lips
> And but its ghost doth reach that vessel, passing, passing.

But, thank God, this is not merely despair. It is also the highest courage. The life that cares deeply enough to stretch its hands and lift its voice is by that very act made partaker of a new life. The poet builded better than he knew. To love life is to live most truly. The best freedom is not outward liberty, but inward faith. When Henry Thoreau was cast into prison for refusing to pay his poll tax, a visitor thus accosted him: "Why, Henry, what are you doing in there?" His retort was even more pointed, "What," he thundered, "are you doing out there?"

We have more goods in our modern world, but we are not happy. We have a few who are fabulously rich, but millions who are in want and desperation. We have libraries and laboratories, art galleries and museums, but we are neither well-read, nor better skilled, nor even cultivated as we should be. And these things hold true for us all, regardless of social class, or race or economic level. We need something more than mere outward signs of progress; we need an inward renewal of spirit. Was it not old General Booth who discerned this when he averred that "Damnation comes from mirrors; salvation from windows!" *Where are the windows of your life that open toward God and his truth?*

IV

Such a world-order as this which religion proposes needs your faith and your loyalty. You who pride yourselves upon the prosperity of this land and thank God that you are not as other men are, look well to your selves. Are you willing to help save humanity from wrong that religion abhors, and are you willing to help build the new world wherein dwelleth righteousness?

It is a strange call, this call to battle. But of course it is the only kind of battle worth fighting. It is all that William James meant when he declared that mankind needed "a moral equivalent for war," and better still, it is what that intrepid New Testament hero voiced when he said: "For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places."

There is your fight; can you measure up to it? It is not easy to confess our faults, and still harder to mend our ways, but if you and I can grasp hold of our resources for earnest spiritual warfare, we shall not yet lose the battle, and we shall still possess our souls.

> For who would live so petty and unblest
> He dare not tilt at something ere he die?
> Rather than, screened by safe majority,
> Prolong his little life to little ends. . . .

And there you have your ultimate challenge. You may, if you wish, prolong your little life to little ends, or you may stand at Armageddon, and battle for the Lord!

What Is Your God?

By Ernest Fremont Tittle

THE first commandment reads, "Thou shalt have no other gods before me." Later, however, in the story of the Hebrew people, you come upon this: "They went a-whoring after other gods"; later still, upon this: "Ye have forsaken me and served other gods: wherefore I will deliver you no more. Go and cry unto the gods whom ye have chosen; let them deliver you in the time of your tribulation"; and, still later, upon this: "If ye worship other gods . . . ye shall surely perish. I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore, choose life, that both ye and your children may live, by loving the Lord your God, by obeying his voice and holding fast to him."

Do these statements have any meaning for us, any importance and significance such that they might almost seem to have been addressed to us? On first hearing, they may sound only as the ghostly voice of a past, long dead, when the race was young and inexperienced and given to all sorts of incredulous beliefs and dark superstitions. On reflection, however, discerning minds may be struck less with their ancient setting than with their contemporary significance. "I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing." That, at least, sounds as contemporary as the latest news dispatch from Madrid or Detroit. Moreover, it is surely conceivable that the author of this statement, the ultimate author, is the ultimate reality of the world, and that the occasion for it today, as long ago, is just this tragic tendency in human nature to turn aside from ultimate reality and, in the strong language of the Old Testament, to go "a-whoring after other gods." History certainly proclaims the fact that there is the devil to pay whenever human beings give their supreme allegiance to anything other than the ultimate reality of the world.

WHAT IS RELIGION?

It is now, I should say, very important for us to get rid of the idea, if we have it, that the only people who are capable of worshiping "other gods" are the so-called "heathen" of backward lands—important, because it is impossible to escape a danger of which there is no awareness; and the present danger of worshiping "other gods" is by no means confined to people who live in the wilds of Australia.

In Carlyle's *Heroes and Hero Worship* there is a passage which is well worth reading and remembering. It may be summarized thus: The chief fact about any man is his religion. But what is his religion? The church creed which he asserts? Not this alone; in many cases, not this at all. But the thing he really believes, often without asserting it even to himself, much less to others. The thing he really believes, which, therefore, is bound to form his attitudes, to influence his choices, to determine what manner of man he will be and what sort of things he will do. The thing he really believes about the world and life and his own duty and destiny. That is his religion; that is the chief fact with regard to him, for it is that which determines all else. So Carlyle. With whom, at this point, may be associated two living voices, one a philosopher, and the other a theologian.

The philosopher, James Bissett Pratt, has defined religion as "the serious and social attitude of individuals or communities toward the power or powers which they conceive as having ultimate control over their interests and destiny." On first hearing, that may appear to be just one more of those arid intellectual statements which philosophical minds appear to delight in but which have little, if any, meaning for the man on the street. But consider how applicable it is to two existing religions—Christianity and fascism. Your sincere Christian believes that the power which has ultimate control over his interests and destiny is God, the Father Almighty, as revealed in Jesus Christ. Naturally, therefore, he takes God seriously. He is concerned to know what the will of God is for him and for all men. That, indeed, is his supreme concern. It is bound to be, in view of his conviction that God, as revealed in Christ, is the ultimate power in the world. That, however, is not the conviction of an Alfred Rosenberg, who believes that the international God of Christian faith is nonexistent; who has said, "The God whom we reverence would have no existence were it not for our soul and our blood." Your sincere nazi believes that the power which has ultimate control over his interests and destiny is the nation, considered both as a political entity and as a racial culture. He, therefore, is concerned to know what the will of the nation is. That is his supreme concern, naturally and inevitably, in view of his conviction that the nation is the reality on which he is finally dependent for his welfare, if not for his existence. Undoubtedly, there is at least some important truth in this philosophical definition of religion as "the serious and social attitude of individuals or communities toward the power or powers which they conceive as having ultimate control over their interests and destiny." And hear, also, the theologian, Harris Franklin Rall, who holds with Luther that "a man's God is to be found in that to which he gives his final obedience and from which he expects the highest help."

Here, surely, are important questions which any man, even though he be a churchman, would do well to put to himself: What do I really believe about the world and life? What do I conceive to be the power having ultimate control over my interests and destiny? To what am I prepared to give a final obedience? In what, when all is said, do I put my trust? In brief, what is my God?

ONE'S SELF AS GOD

It is possible for a man to make a god of himself. In order to do so, he would need, of course, to develop an abnormally large ego; he would need to make his own ambition for wealth or fame or power the supreme object of his devotion; he would need, at last, to rely upon himself, his own ability, in spite of everything, to get what he wants. Occasionally, no doubt, he would need to step down from the throne of his self-regard and engage in some unself-conscious activity, lest he develop an egoism which might easily become psychopathic. But all this may be humanly possible. In fact, it may, I think, be accepted as a not inaccurate description of

certain human individuals who are now disturbingly alive in the world! Their number, however, is few—fortunately for the human race.

MONEY A POPULAR GOD

Far more common is the tendency to make a god of money. How often one encounters the judgment: "Money is his god." And the lips which pronounce it are not in every case the lips of a preacher. More often than not they are the lips of a layman. It is, indeed, a common observation that there are people who make a god of money; and it is by no means without justification. To believe that economic motives, and they alone, largely determine human conduct, so that history, when

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all is said, is but the product of economic forces is, of course, to believe that the power which has ultimate control over man's interests and destiny is a power whose symbol is money. To believe that material goods are the greatest gifts of life, inasmuch as they make possible not only the enjoyment of physical comfort but also the enjoyment of social prestige, and so to seek after them as after nothing else is, of course, to give one's final obedience to a power whose symbol is money. To believe that you can do anything with money, if only you have enough of it, is to assume that money represents the power from which the highest help may come. And who would venture to deny that beliefs such as these are now held and acted upon by large numbers of persons?

Yet it is hardly to be supposed that anyone who makes a god of money is fully aware of what he is doing. How would he receive the suggestion that the first verse of the Book of Genesis should be rewritten so that it would read, "In the beginning Money created the heavens and the earth"; or that the opening verses of the Gospel according to John should be rewritten so that they would read: "In the beginning was Money, and Money was with God, and Money was God. . . . All things were made through Money, and without it was not anything made that hath been made"? To him, a suggestion of this sort would appear absurd, crazy, sacrilegious! Yet, for all that, he may habitually think, feel and act as though it were true that money is the greatest power in the world and also the greatest good in the world; that man are here chiefly to make money; that their happiness depends upon the amount of it they make, as also their success; that a rich man is a successful man, irrespective of the way he has made his money; that a nation possessing great wealth is at once a great power and a great people, irrespective of its intellectual and moral attainments; that economic forces are the only really important forces; that parsons and professors are mostly "innocents abroad," whose labor is mostly vain; that desire for private material gain is bound to be the strongest of all human incentives, inasmuch as material goods and their satisfactions are the greatest gifts of life; that the money-motive is the dynamic which makes the wheels of the world go round; and that anyone who denies this is either a knave or a fool. It is possible to make a god of money without ever realizing that one has done so. A man's god is found in that which he conceives to be ultimate power, to which he is prepared to give his final obedience, and from which he expects the greatest help.

THE STATE AS A GOD

Also, it is possible to make a god of the state. It is possible to claim that the nation is the very highest entity to which human allegiance is due. It is possible to insist that the state, therefore, has a right to direct and control the total life of the individual. It is possible to believe that national policy is the sole criterion of value, even of right and wrong: whatever the state, seeking only its own aggrandizement, orders to be done is right; whatever it forbids is wrong; there is no other criterion of value; there is nothing else to be considered. It is possible to make a god of the state, as now we know. Moreover, the tendency to do so is not confined to any one part of the world. In some countries, no doubt, it is exceptionally pronounced, deliberate and self-conscious; but it would be idle and dangerous to pretend that it is not elsewhere to be found.

No American is likely to say, after the manner of Alfred Rosenberg, "The God whom we honor would have no existence were it not for our soul and our blood." No American may be expected, after the manner of Hitler, to say, "We do not want any other God save the United States of America." The American mind does not work that way. Such tendency as there is among us to make a god of the state is not thus bold and brash. The German mind does not shrink from calling a spade a spade. When the German mind comes to the conclusion that there is no other god save the German nation, it says so quite frankly and without any apology. But there are some spades which we Americans shrink from calling such. Among us, God, the Father Almighty, may be ignored; but he is not likely to be

boldly denied. Yet here, as elsewhere, there is now a tendency to make a god of the state. It is revealed in the decision of the United States Supreme Court (in the Macintosh case) which officially places the will of the state above the will of Almighty God; according to which it is now impossible for a man to become a citizen of the United States unless he considers that his supreme allegiance is due, not to the will of God, but to the will of Congress. Moreover, are there not many among us to whom, apparently, God in Christ means little or nothing, but to whom the United States of America means everything? A reference to the New Testament leaves them cold, whereas a reference to the Constitution brings them, metaphorically, to their feet in rapt attention! And what other symbol has such power to move them, to arouse in them such obvious and sincere emotion, as does the Stars and Stripes? In many of our churches two flags are to be seen, the flag of the nation and the flag of the church; the flag which stands for national loyalty and the flag which stands for a supreme loyalty to God and his purpose for mankind. How interesting, and, possibly, how disturbing, it would be to know which of these two flags appears the more meaningful and precious to those who behold them or, say, which by its removal would create the greater consternation!

It is hard to believe that any American today is deliberately, knowingly making a god of the state. But we are living at a time when many people have lost the faith of their fathers, find it very difficult to believe in any god who is more than man. Yet we are so made that we must worship something; and it is not hard to believe that numbers of Americans, in their deepest feelings, are now making a god of the nation. A man's god is found in that to which he gives his supreme allegiance.

FORCE, AS A GOD, HAS MANY WORSHIPERS

Is it possible, then, to make a god of force and violence? In the past men did do so; they worshiped Mars, the god of war. "But," someone may say, "that was long ago, and Mars is dead, along with Jupiter and Juno and all the rest of the Pantheon of ancient Rome. Who today does or could worship Mars?" But if it be true that religion is "the serious and social attitude of individuals or communities toward the power or powers which they conceive as having ultimate control over their interests and destiny," then Mars today has worshipers aplenty; for certainly there are persons, by no means few in number, who believe that force is the ultimate power in the world, the court of last resort. As they see it, an adequate national defense consists in a preponderance of physical force. As they see it, an adequate industrial defense consists in the possession of plenty of tear gas and machine guns. If it be true that a man's god is found in that which he conceives as having ultimate power, on which, therefore, he is prepared to rely, in which, when all is said, he puts his trust, then it can hardly be denied that today vast numbers of persons who, for one reason or another, feel terribly insecure are making a god of force and violence.

That, it appears, is what people finally feel driven to do when they make a god of money. Truth and right; justice, friendship, and good will—these, of course, can not be defended by force and violence. Anyone who gives thought to the matter may be expected to see that spiritual values can be preserved only by a regard for them, an unswerving loyalty to them, which force and violence make utterly impossible. But what if that which a man cares for most and, therefore, is most anxious to preserve be not truth or right, justice or friendship or good will, but money and the things that money can buy? In that event, he may presently consent to make a god of the state, not because he is enamored of the philosophy of fascism; not because he is glad to surrender his freedom of thought, of speech, and of conscience; certainly not because he is willing and glad to have his children indoctrinated with ideas and attitudes which are strange and startling enough; but simply because he is horribly frightened. He does not like the idea of surrendering his freedom; but he likes even less the idea of losing the savings of a lifetime. He does not like the idea of sacrificing his children to the demands of a totalitarian state; but he likes even less the idea of slipping down from the upper middle class to the lower middle class and thence, perhaps, into the ranks of the proletariat. So, being thoroughly frightened, he reluctantly consents to make a god of the state. And then having himself set at nought every spiritual claim and value, how easy it is for him to suppose that spiritual forces are impotent, how easy to believe that material goods can only be defended by physical force, how very easy to conclude that armies and navies, tear gas and machine guns represent ultimate power!

"THOU SHALT HAVE NO OTHER GODS . . ."

True, there is now no certainty that even material goods can be defended by physical force. A world which twenty years ago staked everything on force and violence now finds itself unsafe not only for democracy but for trade and commerce. But the fact remains, the tragic, psychological fact, that they who allow themselves to make a god of money may finally feel driven by insecurity and fear to vote ever larger appropriations for armies and navies, tear gas and machine guns, until it does seem to be true that physical force is ultimate power. And then, quite literally, there is the devil to pay. For an ultimate reliance upon physical force means not only war, international and civil; it means terrorism and cruelty; it means censorship and espionage, even in industry; it means suspicion, ill will, nervous tension; it means constant, nerve-wracking, increasing fear!

In view of the world situation in which we now find ourselves, how very meaningful become those ancient words, "Thou shalt have no other gods before me" "If ye worship others gods . . . ye shall surely perish" What penetrating insight they had, those ancient preachers who, when they saw their people go "a-whoring after other gods," predicted national disaster. Today any comparable insight will surely see that the awful trouble of the world is due to the fact that men have if not denied, at least lost sight of God, the Father Almighty, as revealed in Christ, and gone after "other gods." That is the ultimate cause of war. That is the deepest reason for industrial unrest. That, today, is

the profound reason for the insecurity, the suffering and the bitter fear of the world.

We are bound to get into trouble whenever we allow ourselves to give our supreme allegiance to anything save the reality on which we are finally dependent for our existence and our welfare. That reality is *not* the nation. For our existence we are finally dependent upon a cosmic environment which no nation created and no nation can maintain. For employment, a chance to work and make a living and retain our self-respect, we are now becoming ever more dependent upon an economic process that does not and cannot stop at any national frontier. For intellectual development, the means of culture, we are wholly dependent upon spiritual forces, as represented in art, literature, music and science, which are as certainly and inevitably international as are rain and sunshine and the whole order of nature. We are bound, therefore, to get into trouble if we are making a god of the state. That means insecurity. That means unemployment. That means the eclipse of culture. We are bound to get into trouble if we place the will of the state above the will of God. That means the destruction of freedom of thought, of speech, and of conscience. That means the denial of the objective reality of truth and of right. Truth becomes whatever the state department of propaganda says it is. Right becomes whatever is ordered in the interest of the state, or of a political party, or of a ruling class. And what that ultimately means is the dissolution of human society, the disintegration of the human soul.

We are bound to get into trouble if we make a god of money; for, eager above all things else to make money and attempting to make it at whatever cost to integrity, justice, brotherhood, and good will, we are bound, soon or late, to produce a situation so chaotic that force and violence are certain to be used by desperate men seeking a way out.

"I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore, choose life, that both ye and your children may live, by loving the Lord your God, by obeying his voice and holding fast to him." That alone is the way to security, to enduring prosperity, to hope and happiness, nobility and true greatness.

The New City

HAVE we seen her, The New City, O my brothers,
where she stands,
The superb, supreme creation of unnumbered human
hands:
The complete and sweet expression of unnumbered human souls,
Bound by love to work together while their love their
work controls;
Built by brothers for their brothers, kept by sisters for
their mates,
Garlanded by happy children, playing free within the
gates,
Brooded by such mighty mothers as are born to lift us
up
Till we drink in full communion of God's wondrous
"loving cup"?

MARGUERITE WILKINSON.

Back to Paganism or On With Christ?

BY HUGH THOMSON KERR

What is man? We see not yet all things put under him. But we see Jesus. Hebrews 2:6, 8, 9.

THE question which is thrusting itself into our bewildered world is the age-old question, "What is man?" Behind all the political philosophies which are competing for our vote, this question intrudes. If we ever find political and economic security it will be because we have found an answer to this fundamental question. Behind the searching criticism that pervades modern literature and perplexes social scientists, this primary issue is constantly demanding consideration.

One of two answers is given. There is no third answer. There is the answer of the materialist and it is as old as history. It is stated by the preacher of Ecclesiastes: "That which befalleth the sons of men befalleth beasts; even one thing befalleth them: as the one dieth, so dieth the other; yea, they have all one breath; and man hath no pre-eminence above the beasts. Who knoweth the spirit of man, whether it goeth upward, and the spirit of the beast, whether it goeth downward to the earth?" That is an old philosophy which is now being given a modern setting. The other is the Christian answer: "Life is real! Life is earnest! And the grave is not its goal. Dust thou art to dust returnest, was not spoken of the soul." The final answer to this age-old question will determine whether our civilization is going back to paganism or on with Christ.

What value has man in the scheme of things? Russia has rejected the spiritual interpretation of life and has accepted scientific materialism which proclaims that man is his own providence and his own deity. A recent scholarly exponent of the Russian philosophy sweeps aside all camouflage and says with admirable frankness: "There can be no mind or thought without brain. The idealists sever thought from the brain and consider that spirit is the beginning of all things. The idealists turn the whole course of things upside down. In their opinion matter is derived from spirit. Materialism declares that there is no spirit world; there is no transcendental world; the world is unitary and its unity lies, as Engels says, in its materialness." This is the official teaching of communism, and because it says that man is destined to die like the animals, communism, as a philosophy of life as well as a planned economy, is impossible. No nation can ultimately consent to live in a house without windows, even if that house be a palace.

Italy, under the dictatorship of Mussolini, has answered the question. The watchword of fascism is, "Nothing against the State, nothing outside the State, everything for the State." In such a political program, what is man? Where is his freedom? What has become of his moral responsibility? The State is absolute, and, apart from the State, man has no rights, no liberties, no destiny. According to this philosophy man was made for the State and not the State for man.

America is seeking an answer. The day was when

the whole country could begin its first great official document with the words: "We hold these Truths to be self-evident, that all Men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness." Mark you, not happiness, but the pursuit of happiness. There is a difference. The day was when America could begin its second great official document with the words: "We, the people of the United States." Today we are engaged in a great conflict in order to decide whether every man within our bounds stands within or outside the chartered circle of freedom and responsibility. Behind all the political philosophies that are demanding our homage the question intrudes, What is man? It has to do with movements within which the life of this generation is cast. The way we answer will decide whether our civilization will be robbed of its content and all life become secularized. It will be fought out in the schools and churches of our land and the issues at stake are the ultimate beliefs that our fathers held dearer than life.

It is important for us, therefore, that we renew our understanding of the Christian way to think about man. We may begin with a reference to the great classic passage on this subject. It has both an Old Testament and a New Testament setting. We will go to the New Testament. "What is man, that thou art mindful of him? Or the son of man, that thou visitest him? Thou madest him a little lower than the angels; thou crownedst him with glory and honor, and didst set him over the works of thy hands: thou didst put all things in subjection under his feet. For in that he subjected all things unto him, he left nothing that is not subject to him. But now we see not yet all things subjected to him, but we see Jesus who hath been made a little lower than the angels, because of the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, that by the grace of God he should taste of death for every man."

I

Against this eternal background, what a tiny speck man is! "When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained; what is man, that thou art mindful of him?" There is the suggestion almost of a sneer in the very rhythm of the words. If this was the thought which filled the mind of the ancient seer, who meditated in the night, who thought the stars were balls of fire set in the darkness, who saw the sun rise and set upon a flat world, what shall we say when our little world is shriveled in size and the starred heavens have been lengthened out into infinity? If you stand in the night in the Canadian forest, or in the mountains, or beside the sea, or out on the sea on a still starlit night, you can count perhaps three thousand stars, but you know that each star you see is a sun and that there are accompanying it some ten million stars you cannot see. You know that one of these stars, Antares, could accommodate within itself some sixty millions of our suns and still have room for more. In such a universe, what is man?

And this very attitude is mirrored everywhere in the Word of God. Take your Bible and see how it exhausts language in speaking of the transitoriness of the life of man. His life is a pilgrimage. He has no abiding city. He is a ship on an uncharted sea—a ship that passes in the night. His life is a shepherd's tent, seen in the evening at the hour of rest, and in the morning the place that knew it once knows it no more. His life is a weaver's thread that is cut before the pattern is perfected; a dream, a sleep, a tale that is told, a vapor that appeareth for a little while, a shadow cast by the passing sunlight, a flower of the field beautiful in the morning but dying at the close of day, grass that groweth up and withereth, water spilt upon the ground.

> Time, like an ever-rolling stream,
> Bears all its sons away;
> They fly forgotten, as a dream
> Dies at the opening day.

We have all entered into the reality of just such an experience.

II

The sense of man's insignificance is not, however, the final explanation of his being. "What is man, that God should be mindful of him?" That is a fact to be reckoned with. God *has* been mindful of him. There is something in that statement to give us thought. As you travel around the world you are shown places that have been visited by the good and the great of this and other ages and those places are consecrated, for the presence of greatness has lifted them out of the common gray into the glory of enviable renown. The eternal God has been mindful of man and has visited him. There must be something behind that divine visitation. There must be some reason for it. It has dignified man, lifted him above nature, revealed the fact that between God and man there is kinship. "Thou madest him a little lower than God." That is the true statement of man's relation to God. Man is the crown and glory of creation because he possesses the nature and character of God. "God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him."

It is only when we get this point of view that we understand what progress and salvation mean. It is only when we stand at the foot of the cross and know that Christ died for men, that he loved them and gave himself for them, that we understand the significance of life. True civilization is not in things but in persons. It is not interpreted by modern machinery and mechanical inventions but by the freedom, equality and liberty of our common humanity. True civilization means the crowning of man and his lordship over all created things. It means that no man can dare speak of people as food for cannons. It means that no man, no matter who he is, will ever dare to say, "What are a hundred thousand men to me?" It means that no man has a right to traffic in any kind of trade which brings desolation into the homes and hearts of the children of men. It means that no man shall exploit little children for gain. It means that no one will ever dare oppose the missionary propaganda, which seeks to lift men from darkness into light, for are they not all God's children? It means that political parties must not create class bitterness or appeal to passions that belong only to the

lower nature of man. This is the moral message of our age. There is only one way of finding the highest values and that is by creating a new spirit which will realize the dignity of our humanity and which will comprehend the infinite value of every single life as we view it through the eyes of Christ. Only in this way shall we come into the realization of that age, prophesied and spoken of by the poet of our modern democracy: "When man to man, the world o'er, shall brothers be." To create that new spirit is the golden opportunity of our day.

III

We know the greatness and the glorious dignity that God has bestowed upon man, but what do we see? "We

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see not yet all things put under him." Man has not yet entered into his inheritance.

If we are honest with ourselves, we will confess to this consciousness of failure, which is a common experience of every man who thinks deeply about life. We are not the men or the women that we ought to be. Sometimes, indeed, the glory of man is revealed. A man suddenly steps forth and shows to the world the divine image. An officer comes into a dugout where a group of his men wait and watch under fire, and an air bomb drops at his feet. Without a word he falls upon it and takes it into his own body, for the salvation of his men, the very form and force of death. In such an act we see, as in a flash, what a true man can be. We have all seen it. We have seen it in great and in obscure people whose names are never written into immortality.

We have also seen man broken, carrying about with him a sense of failure. We become indignant at the revelations of the cruelty, the indignity, the inhumanity of man. The newspapers puzzle and disillusion us, but the reality is worse than the revelation. The failure, the fall of man, is a tragic experience for every one of us. We are not the men or the women we would like to be, and the deep gulf fixed between the real and the ideal is the revelation of our downfall. You can go to the East and you can see the splendor of ancient civilizations in the grandeur of the ruins that remain to surprise you, and you can see the same in the world of men. No one of us but has lived long enough to see the wrecks of humanity thrown upon the highways of life, broken pillars in the temple that is being made without hands, men and women who have been shorn of their influence and their right to power.

IV

What is man? Can we find anywhere a true specimen? Must we be satisfied with the broken failures we see about us? Scientists dig in the earth to discover specimens of prehistoric man and then say, "This was a man." We say, "No." Man is something other than a skeleton found hidden in the hills. We have already been told that man has been crowned by the divine hand, but we do not see him crowned. The Scripture word says: "We see not yet all things subjected to him." There is hope in the words "not yet." Something else is promised. "Not yet" means by and by. We are left indeed with more than hope, for the writer goes on to say: "We see not yet all things subjected to him. But we see Jesus." That is a strange way to reason. Surely that is a strange conclusion. Is there any real connection in the argument: "We see not yet all things subjected to him. But we see Jesus"? That is a strange way to argue. We do not see man crowned but we see Jesus. Is there any hope there? Is there any prophecy there? Is there any salvation there? Surely there is.

We see not yet all things subjected to him, but we see Jesus, and Jesus is a man, and we see him crowned and glorified. You say one robin does not make a summer. Are you so sure of that? If there is one robin, others will follow and summer will soon be here. You say one flower does not make spring. Are you so sure of that? If we see one flower breaking through the sod, even though the snow is still on the ground, we know that there will be others and that soon the garden will be full of bloom, and what one flower and one robin are to the springtime and the summer, Jesus is to our humanity. We see not yet all men crowned, but we see Jesus. We see him and he is crowned with glory and honor. He is not some skeleton specimen of a dead and ancient past, but the prototype and goal of all mankind and in his train the generations follow.

There is something else. Jesus is not only our example. He is our empowerment. He not only champions manhood in himself, he champions it in us: "In that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succor them that are tempted." If Christ only challenged us as an example, he would be, as he indeed is, our condemnation. It would be like placing the work of Phidias before an amateur and commanding him to do likewise. Jesus is more than specimen. He is Savior and Lord. What he is, he will help us to be. He is more than pattern: he is power. He is more than ex-

ample: he is spiritual energy. He is more than the model; he is more than the goal: he is the guide who leads us to the goal. He is not merely an illustration of what man may be at his best: he is the living inspiration of our life, the master light of all our seeing.

The Greeks have a story of a god who entered the cold, crude marble and made it, as it were, live with the winsomeness and warmth of the divine life, and what the Greeks sought after, Christianity has realized. "We see Jesus." "We know not what we shall be, but we know that when he shall be made manifest, we shall be like him."

This is Christianity's answer to the question, "What is Man?" It is the answer which is desperately needed in our day. Man is more than the sum of his instincts and impulses. He is something other than his environment and his social conditions. He is something beyond the history that has helped make him. He needs more than a planned economy. Something depends on who plans the economy and for whom it is planned. There is something about him that is beyond nature, beyond heredity, beyond communism, beyond the State which would make him subservient to its demands. The State was made for man, not man for the State. The essential thing about man is that God has spoken to him and this Divine Word is his credential by which he is privileged to claim sonship with God and fellowship in the Christian community.

'I'm Not Going to Church Today'

By Thomas C. Barr

Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them. Matthew 18:20.

"I'M not going to church today," was a statement made, consciously or unconsciously, by thousands of people this morning. You know the excuses they make. They are too tired, but they find it easy enough to go elsewhere. The weather is too hot or too cold, or if it is fair, the day must not be wasted on church, but spent on the asphalt roads or the golf links. The preacher may preach too long, too ignorantly, or too much against my idea of things. Or I can stay at home and listen to the service over the radio.

Some people don't get far enough along to make an excuse. They have either never gone to church, or they have stayed away so long that the issue of churchgoing is never raised. They are really more honorable than the people who make excuses. They at least make no pretense at church interest. But these others pretend to Christianity, make a pretense of love for the church and the worship of God's house, but make flimsy excuses to stay away. What would Jesus say to these? "Ye hypocrites!"

I should not like to admonish those of you who are present for the absence of others. The people who most need preaching to are never in church, just as the people who most need an education are never in school. It i clear that if they were in these respective places, the would soon rise out of the class of the most needy. Bu it is well for us to think of this matter of church at tendance, not only to arm ourselves against the at tacks of the hypocrites and the godless, but to strengthe ourselves against the temptation to make such excuse For we are all tempted at times, ministers and people to make excuse.

Why should we go to church? Of what value i church attendance? Jesus answers our question "Where two or three are gathered together in my name there am I in the midst of them." Jesus is with the in dividual as he prays alone. He told his disciples to g into their closets and pray in secret, and promised tha they would be heard. But he is most present where group of his followers gather together in his name They have the same spirit as the man who prays i secret: there is no ostentation, no vanity, in their prayer And the promise of the Lord is fulfilled. He is there in the midst of them.

RELIGION TIES MEN TOGETHER

Christianity is a social religion. "When ye pray, say Our Father." It ties men together. It binds them int one great family of those who do the will of God. An in this fundamental part of religion, prayer and wor ship, it joins men together in a common supplicatio and praise. "Where two or three are gathered togethe in my name, there am I in the midst of them."

This certainly does not mean that the only worshi of God is in a church, conducted by a regularly or dained minister. "The hour cometh and now is, whe the true worshipers shall worship the Father in spiri and in truth." Wherever men worship in spirit and i truth, they are the true worshipers. It makes no differ ence how sacred the place may be, or how great th preacher; if the spirit and truth are not there, the wor ship is vain. Jesus seldom preached in a building dedi cated to religious services. His church had for its pew the grass and the stones, his choir consisted of the bird of the heavens, the decorations were the fields and th everlasting hills, and the organ the roar of the sea. Bu the worship was true, for it was in spirit and in truth The disciples on the day of Pentecost were in an upp room, not a church. The early Christians worshiped i the catacombs in Rome, and not in church buildings But wherever these servants had gathered together i their Lord's name, there was he in the midst of them The reason we worship in a church is for the sake o convenience. We have a precedent in Jesus. He started preaching in the synagogue, but was cast out and forced to go to the cathedral of the open air.

Have you not noticed that the Christians most effec tive in promoting the kingdom of God have been habitual church attendants? It is written of Jesus that he went one Sabbath as was his custom into the temple to pray. Paul, after working courageously and earnestly in the new religion, when he returned to Jerusalem went to the temple to pray and pay his tithe, and al ways preached in a synogogue when he was permitted. Have you not noticed people coming through the hard ships of the last few years and using these hardships

as a means of grace, who have been regular church attendants? Whenever you have a hard task to do for the kingdom, where there is plenty of work and no glory, give me the man who week after week is faithful in attendance upon the services of the church.

The public worship of God not only brings us into the presence of Christ; it holds before us the mind and spirit of Christ so constantly that they become ours. How can a man come to church Sunday after Sunday, have held before him the ideals of the Christian life, and not be a fairly good Christian? Some people do thus come to church and are not good Christians, but

THOMAS C. BARR

they are the exception rather than the rule. What would they be if they did not have this contact with things divine? And who among us is so strong, so sure of himself, that he does not need to be reminded of the things which are invisible but eternal? And there is the strength which comes from association with others who are seeking the same things in life. Not only is there strength to receive in this association, but strength to give. We used to hear much of the force of example. Fathers were urged to attend Sunday school that their sons might see them there, and know that going to Sunday school was a manly thing. The story is told of a saint of this church who was stone deaf. He was so deaf that he could not even hear it thunder. And yet every Sunday morning he was seated in his pew in church, with his face set steadfastly upon the minister.

CHURCHGOING AND SALVATION

There are people who feel they can be good Christians and not attend church. Church membership and churchgoing are not absolutely necessary to salvation. They do help toward salvation. The person who feels he does not need the church, that he is superior to the church, that he is a little better than church people, not only possesses the religion of the Pharisee, but also a religion of selfishness. No man with a real knowledge of the mind of Christ can feel that he is so much better than other men. And certainly the true follower of Christ wants to let the light of Christ shine through him in every way possible. Following Christ is not only trying to be good yourself, it is trying to help others to the good life. The public worship of God enables you to fulfill both these duties of the Christian. This, then, is what going to church does for a person. It puts Christ into a person and keeps him there. That is why Jesus said: "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them."

The public worship of God is not likely to stop as long as men look upward and seek God. Sometimes people tell us that the radio will soon end church services. But the present radio instrument can never do it. No politician would dare conduct merely a radio campaign. He organizes meetings, for he knows meetings generate enthusiasm for the campaign in a way the radio can never do. A large part of Hitler's power has been due to his ability to hold such meetings. The case is very much the same with religion. If we want real enthusiasm for our Leader, we must gather with others and talk of him, sing of him, and pray. Only in that way can we have much enthusiasm for the great cause he represents. Worship is creative. It creates a new mind, and renews a right spirit within us. It creates courage, faith, joy, serenity, insight, that we may make our way safely and happily through life. Jesus comes to give us all these where two or three are gathered together in his name. Until a better way is found of bringing to men the presence of the Christ, church worship will ever be necessary.

CHILDREN AND THE CHURCH

Granting attendance upon the worship of God to be necessary and desirable, what can we do to promote such attendance? We must teach churchgoing in the home. Churchgoing is a habit, and one that is best inculcated in youth. But many of our best church people are not teaching their children to attend church. Evidently they think the children will some day be old enough to learn, but that day will never come. The best and strongest habits of life are usually acquired in youth, and going to church is no exception. If the foundation of churchgoing is not laid in youth, it is likely never to be laid. Many of us are thankful for the churchgoing homes from which we came. It never occurred to us to think of going anywhere else on Sunday except to church. Such an environment, where the parents not only attend church but strongly believe in the value of church worship, may not always produce the desired results. It usually does lay the foundation of churchgoing, and is certainly worth trying.

If a child comes to church, will it understand enough to make the service of value to it? Our services are pitched on an adult level. The average minister cannot preach sermons which will be understood by children and at the same time be stimulating to adults. With all that has been said about simplicity, and it is ever the

ideal of all preaching as well as of all life, little children cannot understand all of the sermons of Jesus. Children can get the feel of a worship service, and that is certainly worth having. But we wonder if churches will not have to furnish something more adequate for our children than the usual Sunday morning service. Would it not be possible to so organize a service for children that they would get not only training in the habit of churchgoing, but everything else adults should get from worship? The church must not fail in its part, and the home must not fail in its part. We must teach our children to go to church.

We will do well to make church membership mean more. What difference is there between the church member and the average citizen of the world? When you attend a social function, can you pick out the church members by their good conduct? When you trade in business, do church members show a higher morality? Sometimes church members do stand out in a favorable light, but this light does not shine frequently enough. Church membership is assumed too lightly. This obligation to support the services of the church is hardly given a thought. People have been known to join the church and never attend again. Such things ought not to be. Why should people who year in and year out never attend a service be called church members? Why should men who have been elected to the sacred office of elder or deacon in the church, and who neither attend the services as they have solemnly sworn to do, nor contribute to the support of the church, be considered members, much less officers?

"*ADMONISHING ONE ANOTHER*"

I have been reading a history of Williamsburg county, South Carolina. In this history there are copies of the Sessional records of the Indiantown Church. Case after case is cited of the pastoral oversight the Session took of the members. I read where one of my ancestors, an elder in this church, was appointed to admonish another of my ancestors for an offense against the church and religion. But my ancestors were not the only persons admonished for bad conduct. Many other committees from the Session were appointed to lead erring sinners back to the fold. This Session went too far in its zeal, but at least it should be commended for its interest in the spiritual welfare of its people. We have been so broad and liberal in our churches that church membership has come to have little or no meaning to a world of people, and even the sacred offices of the church are not held in the reverence and respect they deserve. We do not want to be turning people out of the church, although I think it would not be a bad thing for some people, nor for the churches. But we do want to let them know, and it is for their spiritual interest that we should let them know, that we cannot look lightly upon their indifference to their church vows. Our churches would probably be smaller, but they would possess more power. Then would they approach their real meaning—a fellowship of souls, saved by Christ and earnestly seeking to live his life and advance his kingdom.

And we should make public worship ever more helpful and inspiring to the people. Our music must be changed from concerts and half-hearted congregational singing to worship and praise. Our prayers, instead of being as they often are, orations or recitations, must be participated in by the people, as expressing the sincere desires of their souls. And there is always room for improvement in sermons. The best among our young men must be called into the ministry and given the best of training. Our worship should be in spirit and in truth. It should be creative, producing new minds and hearts, courage, faith, peace, joy and hope. The mind and spirit of Christ should ever rule. For "where two or three are gathered together" in his name, there will he be in the midst of them.

We need not be pessimistic about the future of the church. If it passed away, what would take its place? Where would the people worship? Where could they enlist their hearts and minds for the kingdom? The church is not going to die, but it can deteriorate. It can fail in its mission to this generation, and its members can fail to fulfill God's will in themselves, simply through the neglect of its work and worship. God forbid that the church should fail when the world so desperately needs it! God forbid that any of us should fail the church, or him who endured for us the shameful death of the cross!

Let us therefore not forsake the assembling of ourselves together, for "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them!"

Rising From the Dead

By Willard B. Thorp

Whom God raised up, having loosed the pangs of death, because it was not possible that he should be holden of it. Acts 2:24.

WHY was it not possible that Jesus should be holden of death? We are familiar with the traditional answer: that it was because he was Deity itself and the Eternal cannot die. I have never been able to accept that answer. I am satisfied that Jesus was a human being in every sense of the word. If I thought that he rose from the dead by virtue of some quality that was peculiar to him and that is not and cannot be in you and me, then the story of his resurrection would not give me any hope at all. But if Jesus rose from the dead by virtue of something that was in him and that is also latent in me, then it interests me tremendously and Easter begins to have a meaning.

My answer to the question why he could not be holden of death is that Jesus was so intensely alive that not even the grave could keep him dead. And it was not physical vitality. There is no reason to think that he had that to an unusual degree; quite the contrary. It was vitality of the spirit, and of such a nature as exists, in germ at least, in you and me. It was because of that tremendous vitality of spirit that death could not hold him.

And he has been rising from the dead ever since. Again and again this stupid world has tried to keep him down. It has buried him under creeds and rituals and

sacraments, under the solemn pretensions of the clergy, under rigors of monastic discipline and puritan morality and Calvinistic theology. The church itself has often been his tomb, and people have stayed out of it because they wanted life and not death and the living Christ was not there.

Every century has had its own way of burying Christ; but he would not stay dead. He rose again in Saul of Tarsus. He rose again in Francis of Assisi. He rose again in Martin Luther. He has risen again in our own day in Dwight L. Moody and General Booth, in Tolstoy and Jane Addams, in Gandhi and Kagawa—just to mention a few. You can crucify Christ, but you can-

Willard B. Thorp

not keep him buried. No tomb can hold him, no crematory can end him. He is ever changing his garments and appearing in some new guise. But always gentle, always unselfish, always a protestant against shams and cruelty; always that strange unworldly indifference to money and material possessions; always that penetrating awareness of the divine power and the divine truth in all things. Wherever you meet those qualities, you know that he lives again and is still the salt of the earth. Again and again we run our steam-roller over some despised and rejected thing, only to find it standing up again and confronting us with the stigmata of the Crucified.

Easter's Real Challenge

And now let me put before you the real challenge of Easter. Do you think the Easter question for you is the question of your belief as to what lies beyond death? Do you think it has to do with ghosts and psychical research and that sort of thing? I tell you *no*.

This business of rising from the dead is first of all a matter of *being alive*. If you are not rising from the dead now, you never will. Instead of speculating about the future life, we had better face the question whether we ourselves may not be already among the unburied dead.

The sign of life is growth—no growth, no life. There is a shrub in my front yard that has shown no sign of life for a year. In this wonderful spring everything around it has been responding with foliage and bloom; but that shrub has been in a minority of one. Last week we discovered a little faint green on it, just a trace, and we began to hope. As I was writing these words I ran down to look at it, hunting for my Easter sermon. But no, it was gone; the gardener dug it up on Monday! There is certainly a parable in that.

The sign of life is growth; and in human beings the sign of life and growth is the response of *interest*. There was an elderly couple in another city who were members of my church and seemed to have something the matter with them. I asked an able physician to go and see them. After a careful and prolonged examination he said: "There is nothing whatever the matter with those people except that they show no trace of any real interest in anything or anybody outside of themselves." Nothing but that: but of course that was everything. It meant that they were spiritually dead. I felt considerably chagrined, feeling that I had preached and labored in vain; I had certainly failed in that family. The doctor put a nurse into the house, ostensibly to take care of them, but really to see if they wouldn't get interested in the nurse. There was some response, just a flicker, but that was all—like my shrub. And yet those people were members of the church and probably thought they were Christians. You couldn't accuse them of having done any wrong; but it would take a miracle to raise them from the dead.

Not Beliefs, But Life

That is where this Easter question becomes a personal one and puts us all on the carpet. Not your theoretical beliefs about God and Christ. Not your conventional morals. But the quality of your inner being as evidenced in your response to life. The materials of life are all here. The soil is rich, sunshine and rain and everything; but the shrub doesn't respond, it hasn't life in itself.

And for you and me, nature in all its beauty and wonder is here; human life in all its manifold aspects and appeals. All the garnered treasures of the past are here within our reach. You and I are in the midst of it. We have all of these things that Jesus had, and many more that he did not have. What are we doing with it? Are we keeping our hearts open with love and sympathy? Are we keeping our minds fresh and eager? Are we making our lives an adventure in knowledge and freedom and loving service? Are we meeting our situations in such a way as to emerge continually into fuller understanding and fellowship and joy?

That is what rising from the dead means. To be like a tree that grows a new and larger ring every year. To be like a Sequoia Sempervirens: you can cut it down but you can't kill it; from its roots there springs a circle of young trees around the old stump.

Do you think you are alive enough to rise from the dead? How long do you suppose you will have to wait to settle that question? If I were you, I'd settle it right now. "Life begins at ——," just your age, if it hasn't begun for you before. And will that question stay settled? No, it will not. You will have to keep at it every day, growing your rings—living your life at your deepest, fullest and best.

Build thee more stately mansions, O my soul,
As the swift seasons roll!
Leave thy low-vaulted past;
Let each new temple, nobler than the last,
Shut thee from heaven with a dome more vast,
'Til thou at length art free,
Leaving thine outgrown shell by life's unresting sea.

That is what Easter means.

The Message of Easter

By H. R. L. Sheppard

IT was inevitable that Jesus Christ should be crucified; it was also, I think, inevitable that he should rise again. The death of our Lord had to be, not because God so willed it but because the world being what it is, and men being what they are, such a person as Jesus of Nazareth was bound to suffer and if he persisted in his ways to be crucified. . . .

But Christ is risen, that is the astounding cry that goes up today. What about the resurrection? Is it true or is it moonshine served out by his church to keep us as comfortable as possible in a world that is wholly dark? It is a pertinent question. May we consider it? "If Christ be not raised your faith is vain." That is the earliest voice with which we find Christianity speaking. So at any rate they believed when they were near the event, and today the churches of all denominations are declaring with one voice that death had no power over Jesus Christ for on the third day he rose again. Belief in the resurrection is not an academic matter to be discussed without conclusion by Professors Hum and Haw; it is the very soul and core of the Christian Faith. Our Lord's earthly life was indeed brave and gracious and sublime, but it was not really effective as a gospel, indeed it was from the disciples' point of view a failure. Even they could not understand his credentials, his purpose and his plan. I suppose the magnetism of his personality held them in thrall while he was alive, but everything crashed at Calvary and there was nothing of promise that was not shattered into a thousand pieces under the rude shock of the naked cross. The storm descended, there was scarcely any resistance though everything looked promising enough when the Master rode into Jerusalem to the messianic cries of "Hosanna"; but then there was a complete reversal of opinion. He was swept away, nailed like a common criminal to the cross.

It is always necessary to remember how little the earthly life of our Lord actually accomplished for our Lord's followers. Those days for them could only recall later the haunting memory of a dreamer who was indeed adorable but impractical, and of a dream which never came true and had no power to drive men out to any daring adventure of faith. There was nothing left for the disciples when their Lord's body was taken down from the cross save to forget him, to get work at their old trade again and so in time to forget all that had mattered so supremely.

Then there is this resurrection and—this is the point—much more comes to life and light than the Lord himself. For at long last the past is made clear as never before; the light shines back as well as around and forward and illuminates all that had once been dark and baffling.

Those Galilean days, those strange forebodings, all that had been incomprehensible and disappointing come together at last. The plan coheres and turns into a living thing, and a flaming gospel. You can appreciate this effective illumination the moment you note the change that took place in those once so baffled and ignorant disciples. Now they know where they are; they know, too, what they will have to be after. Those unlearned, literal, simple men, once so cowardly that one of them—perhaps the bravest—ran away at the gibe of a serving maid; those men are remade into heroes with a new and almost fearful courage. All this is inexplicable if Jesus Christ did not rise from the dead. They who once babbled like children, and not very intelligent children at that, begin to speak like men with a persuasive ring of confidence in their voices; they ride out in happy valiancy to conquer or die for the risen Lord whose plan for the redemption of the world rose also from the tomb on Easter morning.

A little later the Christian Society knew its mind and began its mission, and today, in the Christian churches, there are gay colors and spring flowers and brave song and fresh hope in men's hearts because early in the morning on the first Easter day, when hope had been despaired of, the Conqueror over death came striding down the garden at sunrise. Death could not hold him. Death, thou shalt die! This is the Christian gospel. Of course, you may doubt the truth of all this but please don't say it doesn't matter one way or the other whether or not Jesus Christ rose from the tomb. It matters supremely. If Christ be not risen the faith of millions is vain and the victorious mission to which our belief commits us seems too big a proposition for unaided and unredeemed humanity.

But to many simple people, of whom I am one, the one great proof that Jesus Christ is alive comes out of the necessities of their own souls. We believe because we need and we believe because we know. We are delivered from discussion by yielding to devotion. It is like this:

Then into his hand went mine,
And into my heart came he,
And I walk in a light divine,
The path that I feared to see.

God has a way of looking at some people until they turn and meet his glance. It is easy enough to laugh all this out of court, to call it dope and self-delusion, but why should not a man living in a world defeated by sin, who himself is a sinner, lift up his heart and mind to God,

and why should not the Almighty and All-Loving make answer?

It is in this way, I think, that most of us come to the mystic certainty of the aliveness of Jesus Christ. We know out of our need and out of our experience that Jesus is very near to those who will dare to receive him. And the comfort that he will give is not that which comes with easy days, it is a veritable strengthening for the warfare of God; the deeper knowledge of Christ depends on the way the warfare is conducted. It is not disbelief that is dangerous to the world today; it is a belief that is merely consoling, conventional and pretty. The vital task of the Christian church now is to point out to tens of thousands of surprised people that they belong to it and to ask them what in heaven's name they intend to do about their membership. The moment a man comes to know—as he may any day—that Christ is alive in him he must look to himself; for, unlike some teachers who explain almost everything and change nothing, Jesus Christ has a way of explaining little but of changing much, almost everything. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

I talk to simple people as I close. If you feel that Christ is alive and near you do not worry overmuch if you cannot explain your faith completely to those who want more arguments than your mind can produce. It may be that if we can live out our faith we shall introduce someone to our risen Lord, and when a good man meets him something always happens. We can leave the rest with our Master and pass on our way with gladness.—*From St. Martin's Review, London.*

Immortality

THE MAN who lives as though he were immortal lives in a universe where the highest spiritual values are permanent, outlasting the growth and dissolution of the stars; where character is the supreme concern of life. . . . We are not digging artificial lakes to be filled by our own buckets, in hopeless contest with an alien universe, but are rather building channels down which the eternal spiritual purpose of the living God shall flow to its "far-off divine event." The truth of immortality makes great living.

HARRY EMERSON FOSDICK.

IT would be interesting to know if our present crop of suicides and neurotics is not partly traceable to motion pictures seen during impressionable years, and to subsequent disappointment or despair when life fails to turn out that way.

PEARL BUCK.

A Pastoral Prayer

BY FREDERICK W. NORWOOD

O GOD, Eternal Spirit, teach us to pray. Let there be wrought among us some of the things that are wrought when men pray. Let the spirit of life and of unity fuse our hearts into a great fellowship. We are conscious that ofttimes we come together like so many separate particles, blown here by varying desires and circumstances, touching each other in proximity, mingling our voices together, but yet not mingled in spirit. Therefore, we beseech Thee that the spirit of quickening life may flow through us and make us everyone responsive to the unity of God and to the fellowship of the people of God. Here alone, under the canopy of Thy mercy, our little differences are blotted out, and we are but pilgrims and strangers, but all alike the children of God.

Our being is thrilling to the mystery and the magic of the springtime morning. We fain would be out under the blue heaven, down by some rolling stream, or upon some hillside, that we might worship Thee in a house not made with hands, but adequate to Thy glory. Yet in our religious life and thought we are aware of the season of Lenten remembrance through which we are passing, and are seeking to discipline our minds and our spirits into the fellowship of Christ in his great Passion. Lo, the spring is calling to us with its gladsome voices, while seasonable memories are calling to us out of the shadows of the Gethsemane Garden, out of the sorrows of Calvary.

And so we live, O God, in this strange life of ours from day to day. Joy and sorrow, conflict and peace, and all manner of contrary things beat upon our spirits at the same time. We are oft the prisoners of our moods, and are swayed to this side and that by our experiences. Yet we feel and believe that there is a unity deep enough to embrace them all. We pray that while we worship we may be led more deeply into that deep peace in which the will of God shall be all-embracing and all-satisfying. O that by the magic and the mystery of the grace of God it might be possible that even now our conflicting experiences may be blended into one, and they who have sorrow may share in others' joy, and they who have joy may feel the pull of the sorrow of others, so that we may share the great fellowship of the people of God in prayer.

We pray Thee that the Great Spirit may move among us and within us in this hour of worship, bringing order into our minds and into our hearts, teaching us both sorrow and joy, and the peace that is compact of both, making us aware of Thy grace, O God, that we may be adequate and content and sufficient in the place where Thou hast set us.

If it please Thee, open upon us the silent windows of vision and let us behold in this hour of worship the great and holy things, the everlastingly true things, the things by which men live. Cause us to be surprised by the presence of God which sometimes, even in our professed seeking, we had not really expected. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Worship in a Time Like This

By John Wright Buckham

NEVER has a greater obligation lain upon the church to vindicate and cultivate worship than today. In an age obsessed with material aims, and mistaking entertainment for recreation, the church owes it to society to demonstrate the spiritual reinvigoration that lies in worship, as an exercise and expression of the noblest powers of the human spirit and an opening of the soul to the entrance of the Divine Spirit. The church is failing to meet this obligation and opportunity as is evident on every hand.

• *Worship An Impulse And An Art*

Worship is both an impulse and an art. It it an art because it is an impulse which requires expression in some degree commensurate with its Object. Since it is an art it must be cultivated just as any art must be in order to accomplish its purpose. The root trouble is carelessness. The careless conduct of worship is not only a defect which is alienating many of the best minds from the church but a sin against the Spirit which should be repented of in works meet for repentance.

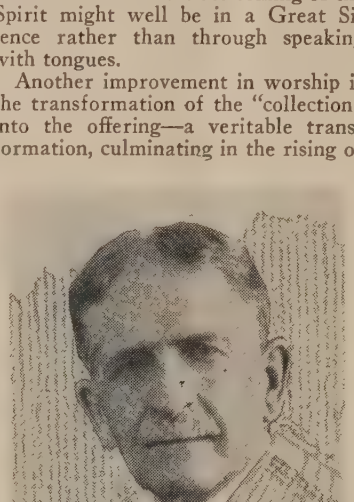
Whoever has the responsible honor to conduct common worship is under a sacred obligation to do so with a deep sense of its meaning and value, and a corresponding attention to every detail that will help to make it worthy of its purpose. Yet here enters a difficulty. Art requires form, and form is always in danger of becoming formalism, thus losing all spontaneity and warmth of feeling. For this reason many ministers eschew all form and purposely seek freedom and naturalness at the expense of form. This is a mistake. Freedom is to be had *through* form, rather than apart from it.

• *'The Framework and The Chord'*

A prescribed ritual, proved and hallowed by long usage, is doubtless on the whole best, provided it is sufficiently flexible to permit of adaptation. On the other hand, much may be said for the individual church, led by its minister, evolving its own order of worship, if there is a sufficient sensitiveness to harmony and knowledge of ritual forms to assure good results.

Two marked improvements in common worship have of late been coming rapidly into practice in nonritualistic churches. The first is silent worship, as a preparation for vocal prayer. Silence, filled with directed intention toward divine reality, is replete with a meaning whose depth we are just beginning to appreciate. If there should be another Pentecost the coming of the Spirit might well be in a Great Silence rather than through speaking with tongues.

Another improvement in worship is the transformation of the "collection" into the offering—a veritable transformation, culminating in the rising of



John Wright Buckham

the congregation to participate in the presentation. This is a truly expressive moment in worship.

A word or two may be interjected here regarding some of those infelicities of expression on the part of the leader of worship, slight in themselves, which have so unfortunate an effect upon some of the more alert minds in the pews. For example, the awkward introduction to the reading of Scripture, which is often heard, "I want to read," et cetera. One feels like answering: "Well, why not? No apology is necessary." There is also that extraordinary summons: "Let us rise as we sing," which suggests a picture of the congregation mounting, as it sings, above the pews, higher and higher toward heaven, intercepted only by the roof of the sanctuary. What congregation has spirituality enough for that?

The leader of worship cannot be too careful about his words and phrases. The sermon is of course the especial ambush of the unhappy word and phrase, as well as the merciless betrayer of loose thought and inadequate preparation. That master of public speech, Professor George Herbert Palmer, once sent to the students of a theological seminary, whom he had been asked to address on the subject of preaching, this succinct advice: "Tell them that every sermon should have a beginning, a middle and an end." Enough said—or at least enough to provoke reflection and fruitage. Structure—yet not too elaborate, and good "terminal facilities"—yet not too abrupt.

It should be added that the sermon, however practical or infused with moral earnestness, is a part of the worship and should share its atmosphere and attitude.

• *Prayer the High Point In Worship*

To lead a congregation in prayer is a sacrament. Yet many prayers are not only without form, but void—void of content, of the spirit of prayer, and of relation to the deeper desires and needs of the congregation and humankind. The pastoral prayer should be vicarious; too often it is self-centered.

The pastoral prayer is indeed the acme of worship. It corresponds in Protestant worship to the elevation of the host in the Mass. It is a truly priestly office. It is the moment in which the people are lifted up to God by the minister and God mediated to them. To approach such an office in the careless manner of commonplace conversation is to demean a holy office. Not that a strained and artificial solemnity is to be desired. There is a language, dignified, expressive, beautiful, such as is found in the confessions and collects of the ages, that belongs to all branches of the church. This is the true vehicle of man's approach to God. The leader of worship should familiarize himself with it. Many of these collects it were well to commit to memory in order to fashion one's own language, however inferior, in conformity with its beauty and simplicity and searching power.

• *Music That Sins Against The Spirit*

Many of our churches have long been sinning against the Holy Spirit and themselves by putting their music into the hands of professional musicians who care nothing for worship or for the church. The result has been "ballooning by the choir," as old Dr. Burton of Hartford—or was it "Jo" Twitchell?—called it—technically admirable, spiritually empty. The end of that era seems at hand. The way is open to the recovery of the singing church through a revival of congregational hymn singing and the service of a truly worshipful choir outwardly vested as well as inwardly consecrated. Such a choir is within the possibility

of almost any sizable church which uses all the resources which are available.

Yet, however excellent and devoted the choir and inspiring its music, the result will be disappointing unless there is entire accord with the leader of the worship, and full cooperation with him in his conduct of the service. An organist or a choir leader who takes the conduct of the service away from the leader and wilfully introduces a change in the order, however slight—such as determining how many verses of a hymn shall be sung—is guilty of mutiny and should be brought before the board of deacons and forgiven—but only upon the promise never to repeat it.

● *"Every Voice Lifted In Praise"*

No music of choir or organ, however, no matter how well rendered, can take the place of congregational singing, in which every voice is lifted in praise to God in one of the great hymns of the church, like Watts' "O God our help in ages past," or Wesley's "Love divine, all love excelling," or Faber's "Faith of our fathers, living still," or Stone's "The Church's one foundation is Jesus Christ her Lord."

A praying and singing church is a living church. Worship in which ardor is wedded to form, prayer is vital, and the great hymns of the church are sung "with the spirit and with the understanding," as Paul counseled, will again reveal to our disheartened and disillusioned time the hope, inspiration and fellowship to be found in this vital renewal and expression of the Christian faith.

Quotable Verse

Life

LIFE is too brief
Between the budding and the falling leaf.
Between the seed time and the golden sheaf,
For hate and spite.
We have no time for malice and for greed;
Therefore, with love make beautiful the deed;
Fast speeds the night.

Life is too swift
Between the blossom and the white snow's drift,
Between the silence and the lark's uplift,
For bitter words.
In kindness and in gentleness our speech
Must carry messages of hope, and reach
The sweetest chords.

Life is too great
Between the infant's and the man's estate,
Between the clashing of earth's strife and fate,
For petty things.
Lo! we shall yet who creep with cumbered feet
Walk glorious over heaven's golden street,
Or soar on wings!

W. M. VORIES.

Chiaroscuro

BEAUTY growing on a thorn,
Love victorious on a tree—
Conquer every cynic's scorn,
Prove life's immortality!

JOHN B. THOMPSON.

Strength

ASK of your soul this question, What is strength?
Is it to slay ten thousand with the sword?
To steal at midnight Gaza's brazen gates?
To raze a temple on a heathen horde?

Or, in a garden drenched with evening dew
And bloody sweat, to pray beside a stone?
Defend a sinner from self-righteous priests?
Bear up to Calvary a cross, alone?

JESSIE WILMORE MURTON.

The Wounded Christ-Heart

ANEW He is wounded! The barbs of His wounding
Are hurled by His children, those marked with His name,
Who carry His banners, who ring forth hosannas—
These robe Him with shame.

Anew He is wounded. The Temple He builded,
The fabric He reared from the stream of His blood,
Is shivered with echoes that score Him, that shame Him—
Who built with His blood.

The Soul-of-the-world is aghast at its moorings—
The rock of its faith that standeth secure—
It is racked by the breakers of sound that beat over;
Keen voices that follow Time's lure.

Oh the Voices! These Voices, all barbèd that bruise Him;
His own children's voices, once pledged and apart,
That shame Him—the Christ of the World—soul immortal—
They wound the Christ-heart.

GEORGE KLINGLE.

Easter

WITH song and sun-burst comes the Easter morn:
Yet was there sunset ere the sun arose;
Under the sod, the rain-drift and the snows,
The nurturing of life, wherefrom was born
The blossom on the breast of beauty worn.
Each way of glory through some garden goes
Where midnight yet a deeper midnight knows,
Against the halo, cross and scourge and thorn.

Will it be always so? The Easter still
Always the answer to what seemeth ill?
Or shall we some day know that all is good
If but the all, at last, be understood?
This the consummate Easter that shall be
In the full sun-burst of Eternity!

ROBERT WHITAKER.

• WHO'S WHO in THIS ISSUE •

SINCE 1924 Rev. M. H. LICHLITER has led the activities of First Congregational Church, Columbus, O., which was made famous by the long ministry of Washington Gladden. Dr. Lichliter was trained for the ministry of the Methodist Episcopal Church, and was pastor of a number of churches of that fellowship, including charges in St. Louis, Baltimore and Cleveland. He entered the Congregational ministry in 1919, and was pastor for five years at Central Church, Newton, Mass.

Graduating from Fisk University in 1910, Rev. WILLIAM LLOYD IMES was awarded an M.A. degree at Columbia, and a B.D. at Union Seminary. He was ordained in the Presbyterian ministry in 1915. Following pastorates in Plainfield, N. J., and Philadelphia, Dr. Imes went in 1925 to St. James Church, New York City, where he still ministers. He has been a member of the Federal Council's committee on direction of race relations since 1929, and has held many other posts of honor and responsibility. Among his published books are *We Believe in Immortality* and *The Music of the Gospel.*

For nearly twenty years Rev. ERNEST FREMONT TITTLE has ministered at the Cathedral church of Methodism, First Church, Evanston, Ill. He has been special lecturer at Yale, Colgate-Rochester, DePauw, the University of Illinois and other schools and seminaries. He has written many books.

Early pastorates of Rev. HUGH THOMSON KERR were in Pittsburgh (Oakland), Hutchinson, Kan., and Chicago. He has led the activities at Shadysid Presbyterian Church, Pittsburgh, since 1913. Dr. Ke was named Moderator of the Presbyterian General A sembly in 1930-31. For a time he served as president the Presbyterian Board of Christian Missions. Last ye his church showed its appreciation of his service in Pitt burgh by granting him a year's leave in Scotland.

Rev. THOMAS C. BARR *received his B.D* degree from Union Seminary in 1929. He served as a sistant and associate pastor of First Presbyterian Churc Nashville, Tenn., from 1929 to 1936, and he was calle as minister of the church in October of last year.

Having received his education at Am herst College and Yale Divinity School, Rev. WILLAR B. THORP was ordained in the Congregational ministr in 1891. Following extended pastorates in Binghampto N. Y., Chicago and San Diego, he was called to First Co gregational Church, Palo Alto, Cal. to which church h still ministers.

Rev. H. R. L. SHEPPARD *has for man* years been vicar of the famous London church, St. Ma tin-in-the-Fields.

Rev. FREDERICK W. NORWOOD, fo nearly two decades minister of the City Temple, Londo retired about a year ago to give his entire time to th cause of world peace.

Dr. JOHN WRIGHT BUCKHAM *is profes* sor of Christian theology in the Pacific School of Religio

TITLES AND TEXTS — What Pulpit Readers are Preaching About

HOWARD W. KING, Kensington Christian, Philadelphia, Pa. "A Life-Changing Adventure." Matt. 4:19—"Follow me."

CLARENCE E. MACARTNEY, First Presbyterian, Pittsburgh, Pa. "The Platform of Christ and His Church." I Tim. 1:11—"The glorious gospel of the Blessed God."

JAMES H. IVEY, First Baptist, Troy, Ala. "Dangerous Detours." Gen. 13:4—"And he went on his journey from the south even unto Bethel unto the place where his tent had been from the beginning."

ELIAS W. THOMPSON, First Reformed (Dutch), Hastings-on-Hudson, N. Y. "The Parable of Pernicious Propaganda." Luke 11:26—"Then goeth he and taketh t himself seven other spirits more wicked than himself.

H. H. LINDEMAN, Congregational, Yankton, S. D. "God Vocabulary." Luke 4:4—"Not by bread alone, but b every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God."

THEODORE C. HONOLD, Christ Evangelical Reforme Cleveland. "Religion Is Practical." I Tim. 4:8b "Godliness is profitable unto all things."

MILTON B. WILLIAMS, Trinity Episcopal, Marshall, M "Returning to the Commonplace." Matt. 2:12—"The departed to their own country another way."

HENRY KENDALL BOOTH, First Congregational, Lon Beach, Cal. "The Immortal Hope." II Tim. 1:10 "Our Savior Jesus Christ hath abolished death an brought life and immortality to light through the gos pel."

ANDREW GILLIES, Third Presbyterian, Syracuse, N. Y "The Time to Get Mad." Eph. 4:26—"Be ye angry and sin not."

ALLAN A. HUNTER, Mt. Hollywood Congregational, Lo Angeles, Cal. "Permanent Values in an Age of Change. Matt. 4:4—"Man shall not live by bread alone, but b every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.

FOR YOUR SERMON AND TEXT

Title of Sermon

Text used (write out the text)

Name of minister

Name of church

Address

The Editor's Page

The Event of the Month

THE last week of February was recognized as Brotherhood Week. Public meetings were held in many centers, radio addresses went out over the air, exchanges of pulpits in churches and synagogues were arranged, and numerous conferences were conducted in which Jews and Catholics and Protestants participated, all with the aim of creating sympathetic understanding and fellowship between Jews and Christians in the common life of American democracy. In this movement, sponsored and promoted by the National Conference of Jews and Christians, every one of us is bound to take a hearty if not anxious part. It is no exaggeration to say that the problem of minorities—racial, national and religious—in our social order is in the long run likely to test our democratic system more searchingly than even the conflict now going on between the economic classes. There is a lacking note in all the reports of addresses which have come to my attention. It is the note of self-examination by the groups themselves to discover whether they are severally guilty at any point of exploiting their democratic privileges. So far as I have heard, the speechmaking talked much about rights, and not at all about duties. In my opinion, Jews, Catholics and Protestants, without relaxing their emphasis on tolerance, should ask themselves this question: Are we, as a group, taking undue advantage of the liberty which American democracy has accorded us to advance and entrench our group interests—our religion or our institutions—by devices and measures which are not congenial with or amenable to democratic standards? To ask this question would lead to some discoveries. Tolerance is not enough. We shall not have cultural brotherhood until each group is ready to abandon any anti-democratic measures which such self-examination may reveal.

The Basis of Brotherhood

The Book of the Month

WHAT IS THE FAITH? *By Nathaniel Micklem. Cokesbury Press, $2.00.*

DOGMA is a word with a bad reputation. Principal Micklem, of Mansfield College, Oxford, undertakes in this book to rehabilitate it. Whether he succeeds or not, I am not ready to say, but his effort makes most interesting reading. "Dogma" is distinguished from the "gospel" on one hand and "doctrine" on the other. The gospel is the "story" or *mythos*" of God's reconciling gift of his son for us men and our salvation. Doctrine or theology is the transitory or individualistic form in which reason interprets that story. Dogma lies between and partakes of both gospel and doctrine—as little as possible of doctrine and as little as possible of the story form, but including the whole meaning of the *mythos*. What interests me most about this book is its illustration of the profound influence of Barthian thought upon one of England's most typical liberals. I do not think that Dr. Micklem's theism is Barthian, but in every other respect his theology reflects that school. In an introduction the author gives an account of the changes which his thought has undergone in the past decade. No doubt the Oxford and Edinburgh conferences next summer will disclose how widely this influence has been felt in Great Britain and on the Continent, as well as in the United States. I would venture the guess that Dr. Micklem's answer to the question, "What is the Faith?" presents a pretty accurate anticipation of the theology that will dominate these conferences. Most readers would, I think, call this book conservative, and many would call it reactionary. I am not sure that I would label it as either.

A Thought for the Month

THROUGHOUT the Christian church we are witnessing a resurgence of interest in theology. Our time is not unlike that classic period when the faith of the church was crystallized by the councils of Nicaea and Chalcedon. One cannot help wondering what is happening to the social gospel in all this preoccupation with Christian doctrine. Is it being discredited as the shallow thing which European Christianity has described it to be? Is it, after all, only an expression of American "activism"? Does the social vision which we Americans associate with the great names of Gladden and Peabody and Rauschenbusch represent merely a passing phase, a kind of desperate attempt to keep our hands busy at *something* because our minds were bereft of profound insight and conviction? I cannot agree with those who answer these questions affirmatively. On the contrary, it seems to me that it is the social gospel itself which is the prime cause of present day theological activity. It is no discredit to the social gospel to admit that it has lacked depth. One can say, as I am willing to say, that the social gospel is immature, and in a sense premature. It has seemed to many to put the cart before the horse. It has assumed the character of secular reform, a species of moralism which not only thrusts the church into partisan politics and economics, but tends to blight religious reality at the roots. With much of this criticism we can agree. But it does not follow that we should repudiate the social gospel. Instead, it seems clear that what our German and British and American theologians, despite the wide differences which obtain among them, are now doing is to explore and disclose the theological implications of the gospel for a redeemed society. A great new consensus of Christian thought is now in process of formulating itself throughout Christendom. Instead of diverting our interest from the social gospel, I expect to see that gospel come forth with new power, no longer as an expression of partisan liberalism but as an expression of ecumenical Christian faith.

Theology and the Social Gospel

Charles Clayton Morrison

Prizes for Pulpit Illustrations!

AS ANNOUNCED IN LAST MONTH'S PULPIT, **REV. STANLEY I. STUBER** is preparing an ENCYCLOPEDIA OF PULPIT ILLUSTRATIONS to be published by Willett, Clark & Company. Mr. Stuber desires to secure the collaboration of all ministers and divinity students of America. An award of prizes will be made for the best illustrations, in *groups of ten,* sent to Mr. Stuber as candidates for inclusion in this unique anthology. (In case of ties, duplicate awards will be made.)

Here are the prizes: $50 for the best group of ten illustrations submitted. $25 for the second best group of ten. $15 for the third best group of ten. $10 for the fourth best group of ten. In addition, to these cash prizes, *copies of the book* will be given to the 25 ministers or divinity students submitting the next 25 best groups of ten. (The compiler will be the sole arbiter as to the merits of illustrations.)

WHAT ARE YOUR TEN BEST SERMON ILLUSTRATIONS? Whether you have found them in your own experience, or whether they have leapt out at you from some book or magazine, or whether you have heard them from some other speaker—what *ten illustrations* are in your judgment the most illuminating and effective?

Send your illustrations now, observing these rules:

1. **No person may enter more than one group of ten illustrations.**
2. **Authors and sources must be given when illustration is not original.**
3. **Illustrations may be typewritten, or they may be submitted as clipped from magazines and papers, neatly pasted on white paper. (No script manuscripts accepted.)**
4. **All illustrations received are to be considered available for inclusion in the Encyclopedia, whether they earn prizes or not.**
5. **Your *group of ten illustrations* should be mailed, early as possible, to Rev. Stanley I. Stuber, First Baptist Church, Clifton Springs, N. Y.**

Mr. Stuber Suggests for Your Guidance

1. Wanted—fresh illustrations which cast the light of truth upon the essentials of Christian faith—the great doctrines, such as God, Christ, the Incarnation, the Cross, Resurrection, Immortality, the Church, the Bible—and any aspect of practical Christian living and service. If science can throw any light on Christian problems, well and good. Illustrations picturing the achievements of Christianity in social, racial and economic relations will be specially welcomed. Recent results of Christianity on the mission field. Modern miracles of the Good Physician in the twentieth century. Note particularly that we desire illustrations throwing new light on any verse or passage in the Bible (indicate verse or passage illustrated); also especially welcome are revealing readings from the New Translations.

2. All illustrations should speak the language of the twentieth century, in plain, simple English.

3. Illustrations should be brief and to the point. Few should run over 300 words. Sentence illustrations, enlightening phrases, lively quotations gleaned from current books will receive special attention.

Send your group of ten illustrations to Mr. Stuber, at address given above. Do not send to publishers

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